

(86)

21 October 1974

MEMORANDUM:

SUBJECT : The Effects of the Cominformist Affair in
Yugoslavia

The outcome of the Cominformist plot in Yugoslavia was essentially shaped by two factors. They are

- Tito's strong initial inclination to suppress the whole affair, and
- Moscow's persistent refusal to accommodate Yugoslav demands that Soviet support of such activities be stopped.

One of the prime motives underlying Tito's rapprochement with Moscow was his desire to ensure the survival of Yugoslavia's independence and its peculiar brand of socialism. Relations with the Kremlin had to be composed in order to leave his successors as free as possible from the prospect of Soviet interference. By November 1973, so much progress had been made that Tito came home from the Kiev Summit to tell his subordinates he trusted Brezhnev. In Sarajevo last April, just as his security services were stumbling onto the cominformist

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plot, he publicly proclaimed that there was no threat to Yugoslavia from the East.

Despite Belgrade's hypersensitivity to any kind of emigre activity, the chances are that neither Tito nor the men around him ascribed much importance to the cominformists at first. As the evidence of Soviet complicity mounted, Tito's growing anger was more than balanced by his overriding concern to preserve the warm relationship he had built with the Kremlin. Resisting the clamor among his subordinates to reveal the plot to the public, he chose instead to protest repeatedly to Moscow, in both party and government channels.

The protesting was to no avail. By the end of August it was clear that the Soviets had no intention--even in private--either of acknowledging their involvement in the plot or of giving any assurances against a recurrence. Tito nevertheless gave the Kremlin one last chance, and sent Edvard Kardelj off to Moscow to discuss the matter with Brezhnev.

This in itself was a signal to the Soviets of the seriousness with which Belgrade regarded the plot. It was Kardelj who had gone to Moscow in 1948 to stand up to Stalin during the break with the Cominform.

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That Kardelj's mission failed is clearly evident in Tito's blistering revelation of the whole cominformist affair two days after Kardelj got home. In the six weeks since Tito's speech, Belgrade has

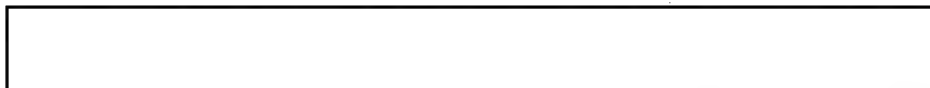
--seen to it that both its own people and the West are fully aware that the Soviets have been caught meddling in Yugoslavia's internal affairs;

--tried to avoid any further downturn in relations with Moscow by keeping things as placid as possible on the surface.

Beneath the surface, however, there are signs that the Yugoslavs are increasingly uneasy on two scores. They may well believe that in the cominformist affair they have only seen the tip of the iceberg. Belgrade's allegations that the plotters were trying to rally support from other anti-Tito factions suggest its suspicion that the Soviets are conducting other, more sophisticated operations that the security services have not yet uncovered.

Beyond that, Yugoslavia's policy makers must come to grips with the vital question of Soviet intentions toward the country after Tito dies. They will see in Moscow's demonstrated

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willingness to meddle before he goes, and its refusal to give guarantees for the future, convincing evidence that the Kremlin's distaste for Titoism remains as strong as ever. This perception, buttressed by their recognition that the "trust relationship" between Belgrade and Moscow has been shattered, will shape Yugoslavia's policies for some months to come.

What will be done may, in fact, have been decided last week, when both internal and foreign policy were evidently subjected to a thorough going review at three separate sessions of the party-executive-committee. *(collective state intervention)*

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On the domestic scene, we expect a continued tightening of internal security as the regime cracks down on extremists of every stripe. Belgrade is trying to give the impression of a balanced approach toward dissidence, but cominformists and like elements are sure to get special attention. Both before and after Tito goes, the prime concern will be to prevent the coalescence of any pro-Soviet opposition that could seize on political turmoil to invite the kind of "fraternal assistance" that Moscow extended to anti-Dubcek elements in Czechoslovakia.

Tightened security will probably be accompanied by increased attention to defense, and particularly to Yugoslavia's

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"All People's Defense" concept of national partisan warfare. The most recent sign of this was the creation at the final session of the ~~executive committee~~ *collective presidency* last week, of a new Council of National Defense with Tito as its chairman.

Relations with Moscow will continue to be quite correct, but lacking in their previous cordiality. The Yugoslavs will not do anything to provoke Moscow's ire--unless and until they ferret out still more evidence that the Soviets have been poking about in their affairs.

But Belgrade's attitude will be hammered home by its actions both in inter-party relations and in the realm of foreign affairs generally. As Aleksandar Grlickov, Yugoslavia's delegate to the Warsaw party meeting made clear last week, the keystones of Yugoslav policy will be independence and non-alignment.

--Belgrade will resist all Soviet attempts to re-establish Moscow's hegemony in the world communist movement, and will thus move closer to Romania's positions.

--This stance will be re-enforced by increasing emphasis on non-alignment, which Belgrade views as a potentially powerful third force between the superpowers.